

POEMS

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ALSO IN THE SERIES

WALTER DE LA MARE



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POEMS

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POEMS

BY WALTER DE LA MARE

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CHARACTERS FROM SHAKESPEARE

FALSTAFF

'Twas in a tavern that with old age stooped
And leaned rheumatic rafters o'er his head,—
A blowzed, prodigious man which talked, and
stared,

And rolled, as if with purpose, a small eye
Like a sweet Cupid in a cask of wine.

I could not view his fatness for his soul,
Which peeped like harmless lightnings and
was gone ;

As haps to voyagers of the summer air.
And when he laughed, Time trickled 'neath
those beams,

As in a glass ; and when in self-defence
He puffed that paunch, and wagged that huge,
Greek head,

Nosed like a Punchinello, then it seemed
An hundred widows wept in his small voice,
Now tenor, and now bass of drummy war.

He smiled, compact of loam, this orchard
man ;

Mused like a midnight, webbed with moon-
beam snares

Of flitting Love ; woke—and a King he stood,
Whom all the world hath in sheer jest refused
For helpless laughter's sake. And then, for-
fend !

Bacchus and Jove reared vast Olympus there ;
And Pan leaned leering from Promethean eyes.
“ Lord ! ” sighed his aspect, weeping o'er the
jest,

“ What simple mouse brought such a mountain
forth ? ”

MACBETH

ROSE, like dim battlements, the hills and
reared

Steep crags into the fading primrose sky ;
But in the desolate valleys fell small rain,
Mingled with drifting cloud. I saw one come,
Like the fierce passion of that vacant place,
His face turned glittering to the evening sky ;
His eyes, like grey despair, fixed satelessly
On the still, rainy turrets of the storm ;
And all his armour in a haze of blue.

He held no sword, bare was his hand and
clenched,

As if to hide the inextinguishable blood
Murder had painted there. And his wild mouth
Seemed spouting echoes of deluded thoughts.
Around his head, like vipers all distort,
His locks shook, heavy-laden, at each stride.

If fire may burn invisible to the eye ;
O, if despair strive everlastingly ;
Then haunted here the creature of despair,
Fanning and fanning flame to lick upon
A soul still childish in a withered hell.

BANQUO

WHAT dost thou here far from thy native place ?
What piercing influences of heav'n have stirred
Thy heart's last mansion all-corruptible to
wake,

To move, and in the sweets of wine and fire
Sit tempting madness with unholy eyes ?
Begone, thou shudd'ring, pale anomaly !
The dark presses without on yew and thorn ;
Stoops now the owl upon her lonely quest ;
The pomp runs high here, and our beauteous
women

Seek no cold witness—O, let murder cry,
Too shrill for human ear, only to God !
Come not in pow'r to wreak so wild a vengeance !
Thou know'st not now the limit of man's heart ;
He is beyond thy knowledge : Gaze not then,
Horror enthron'd lit with insanest light !

MERCUTIO

ALONG an avenue of almond-trees
Came three girls chattering of their sweethearts
three.

And lo ! Mercutio, with Byronic ease,
Out of his philosophic eye cast all
A mere flow'r'd twig of thought, whereat . . .
Three hearts fell still as when an air dies out
And Venus falters lonely o'er the sea.

But when within the further mist of bloom
His step and form were hid, the smooth child
Ann

Said, "La, and what eyes he had !" and Lucy
said,

"How sad a gentleman !" and Katharine,
"I wonder, now, what mischief he was at."
And these three also April hid away,
Leaving the Spring faint with Mercutio.

JULIET

SPARROW and nightingale—did ever such
Strange birds consort in one untravelled heart?
And yet what signs of summer, and what signs
Of the keen snows humanity hath passed
To come to this wild apple-day! To think
So young a throat might rave so old a tune!
Youth's amber eyes reflect such ardent stars,
And capture heav'n with glancing! Was she
not

Learn'd by some angel from her mother's womb
At last to be Love's mistress? doth not he
Rest all his arrows now and mutely adream
Seek his own peace in her Italian locks?
Cometh not Romeo singing in the night?—
Singing of youth—whose clust'ring locks do nod
And weave confusing shadows o'er his brow.
Sing on bright tongue and quench these fears
of silence!—

But at the end waits Death to pluck his bloom,
Which is of yew the everlasting star.

JULIET'S NURSE

IN old-world nursery vacant now of children,
With posied walls, familiar, fair, demure,
And facing southward o'er romantic streets,
Sits yet and gossips winter's dark away
One gloomy, vast, glossy, and wise, and sly :
And at her side a cherried country cousin.
Her tongue claps ever like a ram's sweet bell ;
There's not a name but calls a tale to mind—
Some marrowy patty of farce or melodram ;
There's not a soldier but hath babes in view ;
There's not on earth what minds not of the
midwife :

'O, widowhood that left me still espoused !'
Beauty she sighs o'er, and she sighs o'er gold ;
Gold will buy all things, even a sweet husband,
Else only Heav'n is left and—farewell youth !
Yet, strangely, in that money-haunted head,
The sad, gemm'd crucifix and incense blue

Is childhood come again. Her memory
Is like an ant-hill which a twig disturbs,
But twig stilled never. And to see her face,
Broad with sleek homely beams ; her babied
 hands,
Ever like 'lighting doves, and her small eyes—
Blue wells a-twinkle, arch and lewd and
 pious—
To dark'n all sudden into Stygian gloom,
And paint disaster with uplifted whites,
Is life's epitome. She prates and prates—
A waterbrook of words o'er twelve small
 pebbles.
And when she dies—some grey, long, summer
 evening,
When the bird shouts of childhood thro' the
 dusk,
'Neath night's faint tapers,—then her body
 shall
Lie stiff with silks of sixty thrifty years.

DESDEMONA

A STONY tomb guards one who simply
dreams

Of peace that shines, tho' love went down in
storm—

Dreams ever a dark visage stoopeth o'er,
Whose darkness is not hatred but a mask
Love took for tend'rer loving. And when
night

Steals thro' the sky to mock Othello, then
Rises she, counting at the windows high
Star after star till all her prayer be told,
And dawn repeat the glory of her end.

But on one day, in affluence of June,
At topmost flood of noon a shadow falls
Sweet at her side, chill head to snowy foot ;
And then it seems the cypresses obscure
Whisper, 'O willow !' ; and a shrill bird
swoops,

As if the Moor had flown a silver soul
To take her captive at the key of Heaven !

IAGO

A DARK lean face, a narrow, slanting eye
Whose deeps of blackness one pale taper's
beam

Haunts with a flitting madness of desire ;
A heart whose cinder at the breath of passion
Glows to a momentary core of heat
Almost beyond indifference to endure :—
So parched Iago frets his life away.

His scorn works ever in a brain whose wit
This world hath fools too many and gross to
seek.

Ever to live incredibly alone,
Mask'd, shivering, deadly, with a simple Moor
Of idiot gravity, and one pale flow'r
Whose chill would quench in everlasting peace
His soul's unmeasured flame—O paradox !
Might he but learn the trick !—to wear her
heart

One fragile hour of heedless innocence,
And then, farewell, and the incessant grave.

“O fool! O villain!”—’tis the shuttlecock
Wit never leaves at rest. It is his fate
To be a needle in a world of hay,
Where honour is the flattery of the fool;
Sin, a tame bauble; lies, a tiresome jest;
Virtue, a silly, whitewashed block of wood
For words to fell. Ah! but the secret lacking—
The secret of the child, the bird, the night,
Faded, flouted, bespattered, in days so far
Hate cannot bitter them, nor wrath deny;—
Else were this Desdemona . . . Why!
Woman a harlot is, and life a nest
Fouled by long ages of forked fools. And
God—

Iago deals not with a tale so dull:

T’ have made the world—Fie on thee, Artisan!

CASCA

BUTCHERS are honest though their agile knives
They wield with an engrossed dexterity.
To smile with natural hatred like a dog,
Dull, fretful, thirsty ;—this is to be he
Who may unheated lave in burning blood
Hands white and large with idleness and sleep.
He is earth's hero—this plain, bloated Casca.
He glides like a great woman ; while a hare
Squats in his shaggy breast, and stares, and
 trembles
If peeps the lightning in. So, let him pass ;
His bloody hands his chosen orators.
There is much pig's flesh in a world of swine,
White as the lily.

IMOGEN

Ev'N she too dead! all languor on her brow,
All mute humanity's last simpleness,—
And yet the roses in her cheeks unfall'n!
Can death haunt silence with a silver sound?
Can death, that hushes all music to a close,
Pluck one sweet wire scarce-audible that
trembles,

As if a little child, called Purity,
Sang heedlessly on of his dear Imogen?
Surely if some young flow'rs of Spring were put
Into the tender hollow of her heart,
'Twould faintly answer, trembling in their
petals.

Poise but a wild bird's feather, it will stir
On lips that even in silence wear the badge
Only of truth! Let but a cricket wake
And sing of home, and bid her lids unseal
The unspeakable hospitality of her eyes.

O childless soul,—call once her husband's name !
And even if indeed from these green hills
Of England, far, her spirit flits forlorn,
Back to its youthful mansion it will turn,
Back to the floods of sorrow these sweet locks
Yet heavy bear in drops ; and Night shall see
Unwearying as her stars still Imogen,
Pausing 'twixt death and life on one hush'd
word.

POLONIUS

THERE haunts in Time's bare house an active
ghost,

Most flattered at his name, Polonius.

He moves small fingers much, and all his speech

Is like a sampler of precisest words,

Set in the pattern of a simpleton.

His mirth floats eerily down chill corridors ;

His sigh—it is a sound that loves a keyhole ;

His tenderness a faint court-tarnisht thing ;

His wisdom prates as from a wicker cage ;

His very belly is a pompous nought ;

His eye a page that hath forgot his errand.

Yet in his bran—his spiritual bran—

Lies hid a child's demure, small, silver whistle

Which, to his horror, God blows, unawares,

And sets men staring. And 'tis sad to think,

Might he but don indeed thin flesh and blood,

And pace important to Law's inmost room,
He'd see, much marvelling, one immensely wise,
Named Bacon, who, at sound of his youth's step,
Would turn and call him Cousin—for the
likeness.

OPHELIA

THERE runs a crisscross pattern of small leaves
Espalier, in a fading summer air,
And there Ophelia walks, an azure flower,
Whom wind, and snowflakes, and the sudden
rain

Of love's wild skies have purified to heav'n.
There is a beauty past all weeping now
In that sweet, crooked mouth, that vacant
smile ;

Only a lonely grey in those mad eyes,
Which never on earth shall learn their loneli-
ness.

And when 'mid startled birds she sings lament,
Mocking in hope the long voice of the stream,
It seems her heart's lute hath a broken string.
Ivy she hath, that to old ruin clings ;
And rosemary, that sees remembrance fade ;
And pansies, deeper than the gloom of dreams ;

But ah ! if utterable, would this earth
Remain the base, unreal thing it is?
Better be out of sight of peering eyes ;
Out—out of hearing of all-useless words,
Spoken of tedious tongues in heedless ears !
And lest, at last, the world should learn heart-
secrets ;
Lest that sweet wolf from some dim thicket
steal ;
Better the glassy horror of the stream !

HAMLET

UMBRAGEOUS cedars, murmuring symphonies,
Stoop'd in late twilight o'er dark Denmark's

Prince :

He sat, his eyes companioned with dream—
Lustrous large eyes that held the world in view
As some entrancèd child's a puppet show.

Darkness gave birth to the all-trembling stars,
And a far roar of long-drawn cataracts,
Flooding immeasurable night with sound.

He sat so still, his very thoughts took wing,
And lightest Ariels the stillness haunted
With midge-like measures ; but, at last, even
they

Sank 'neath the influences of his night.

The sweet dust shed faint perfume in the
gloom ;

Through all wild space the stars' bright arrows
fell

On the lone Prince—the troubled son of man—
On Time's dark waters in unearthly trouble :

Then, as the roar increased, and one fair tower
Of cloud took sky and stars with majesty,
He rose, his face a parchment of old age,
Sorrow hath scribbled o'er, and o'er, and o'er.

COME !

FROM an island of the sea
Sounds a voice that summons me,—
“Turn thy prow, sailor, come
With the wind home !”

Sweet o'er the rainbow foam,
Sweet in the treetops, “Come,
Coral, cliff, and watery sand,
Sea-wave to land !

“Droop not thy lids at night,
Furl not thy sails from flight ! . . . ”
Cease, cease, above the wave,
Deep as the grave !

O, what voice of the salt sea
Calls me so insistently ?
Echoes, echoes, night and day,—
“Come, come away !”

THE WINTER-BOY

I SAW Jack Frost come louping o'er
A hill of blinding snow ;
And hooked upon his arm he bore
A basket all aglow.

Cherries and damsons, peach and pear,
The faint and moonlike quince ;
Never before were fruits as rare,
And never have been since.

“Come, will ye buy, ma'am?” says he sweet ;
And lo ! began to fly
Flakes of bright, arrowy, frozen sleet
From out the rosy sky.

“Silver nor pence, ma'am, ask I ; but
One kiss my cheek to warm,—
One with your scarlet lips tight shut
Can do you, ma'am, no harm.”

O, and I stooped in that still place
And pressed my lips to his ;
And his cold locks about my face
Shut darkness in my eyes.

Never, now never shall I be
Lonely where snow is laid ;
Sweet with his fruits comes louping he,
And says the words he said.

His shrill voice echoes, slily creep
His fingers cold and lean,
And lull my dazzled eyes asleep
His icy locks between.

TEARS

THEY told me Pan was dead, but I
Oft marvelled who it was that sang
Down the green valleys languidly
Where the grey elder-thickets hang.

Sometimes I thought it was a bird
My soul had charged with sorcery ;
Sometimes it seemed my own heart heard
Inland the sorrow of the sea.

But even where the primrose sets
The seal of her pale loveliness,
I found amid the violets
Tears of an antique bitterness.

SORCERY

“WHAT voice is that I hear
Crying across the pool?”

“It is the voice of Pan you hear,
Crying his sorceries shrill and clear,
In the twilight dim and cool.”

“What song is it he sings,
Echoing from afar ;
While the sweet swallow bends her wings,
Filling the air with twitterings,
Beneath the brightening star?”

The woodman answered me,
His faggots on his back :—
“Seek not the face of Pan to see ;
Flee from his clear note summoning thee
To darkness deep and black !

“ He dwells in thickest shade,
Piping his notes forlorn
Of sorrow never to be allayed ;
Turn from his coverts sad
Of twilight unto morn ! ”

The Woodman passed away
Along the forest path ;
His axe shone keen and grey
In the last beams of day :
And all was still as death :—

Only Pan singing sweet
Out of Earth's fragrant shade ;
I dreamed his eyes to meet,
And found but shadow laid
Before my tired feet.

Comes no more dawn to me,
Nor bird of open skies.
Only his woods' deep gloom I see
Till, at the end of all, shall rise,
Afar and tranquilly,
Death's stretching sea.

THE CHILDREN OF STARE

WINTER is fallen early
On the house of Stare ;
Birds in reverberating flocks
Haunt its ancestral box ;
Bright are the plenteous berries
In clusters in the air.

Still is the fountain's music,
The dark pool icy still,
Whereon a small and sanguine sun
Floats in a mirror on,
Into a West of crimson,
From a South of daffodil.

'Tis strange to see young children
In such a wintry house ;
Like rabbits' on the frozen snow
Their tell-tale footprints go ;
Their laughter rings like timbrels
'Neath evening ominous :—

Their small and heightened faces
Like wine-red winter buds ;
Their frolic bodies gentle as
Flakes in the air that pass,
Frail as the twirling petal
From the briar of the woods.

Above them silence lours,
Still as an arctic sea ;
Light fails, night falls, the wintry moon
Glitters, the crocus soon
Will ope grey and distracted
On earth's austerity :—

Thick mystery, wild peril,
Law like an iron rod :—
Yet sport they on in Spring's attire,
Each with his tiny fire
Blown to a core of ardour
By the awful breath of God.

AGE

THIS ugly old crone—
Every beauty she had
When a maid, when a maid.
Her beautiful eyes,
Too youthful, too wise,
Seemed ever to come
To so lightless a home—
Cold and dull as a stone.
And her cheeks—who would guess
Cheeks cadav'rous as this
Once with colours were gay
As the flower on its spray?
Who would ever believe
Aught could bring one to grieve
So much as to make
Lips bent for love's sake
So thin and so grey?
O sweet Youth, come away!

All she asks is her lone,
This old, desolate crone.
She loves us no more ;
She is too old to care
For the charms that of yore
Made her body so fair.
Past repining, past care,
She lives but to bear
One or two fleeting years
Earth's indiff'rence : her tears
Have lost now their heat ;
Her hands and her feet
Do but shake but to be
Shed as leaves from a tree ;
And her poor heart beats on
Like a sea—the storm gone.

THE GLIMPSE

ART thou asleep? or have thy wings
Wearied of my unchanging skies?
Or, haply, is it fading dreams
Are in my eyes?

Not ev'n an echo in my heart
Tells me the courts thy feet trod last,
Bare as a leafless wood it is
When summer's past.

My inmost mind is but a book
The reader dulls with lassitude,
Wherein the same old, lovely words
Sound poor and rude.

Yet through this vapid surface, I
Seem to see old-time deeps; I see,
Past the dark painting of the hour,
Life's ecstasy,

Only a moment ; as when day
Is set, and in the shade of night,
Through all the clouds that compassed her,
 Stoops into sight.

Pale, changeless, everlasting Dian,
Gleams on the prone Endymion,
Troubles the dulness of his dreams,—
 And then is gone.

REMEMBRANCE

THE sky was like a waterdrop
In shadow of a thorn,
Clear, tranquil, beautiful,
Dark, forlorn.

Lightning along its margin ran ;
A rumour of the sea
Rose in profundity and sank
Into infinity.

Lofty and few the clms, the stars
In the vast boughs most bright ;
I stood a dreamer in a dream
In the unstirring night.

Not wonder, worship, not ev'n peace
Seemed in my heart to be :
Only the memory of one,
Of all most dead to me.

SHADOW

EVEN the beauty of the rose doth cast,
When its bright, fervid noon is past,
A still and lengthening shadow in the dust
 Till darkness come
 And take its strange dream home.

The transient bubbles of the water paint
'Neath their frail arch a shadow faint ;
The golden nimbus of the windowed saint,
 Till shine the stars,
 Casts pale and trembling bars.

The loveliest thing earth hath, a shadow hath,
A dark and livelong hint of death,
Haunting it ever till its last faint breath :
 Who, then, may tell
The beauty of heav'n's shadowless asphodel ?

UNREGARDING

PUT by thy days like withered flowers
In twilight hidd'n away !
Memory shall upbuild thee bowers
Sweeter than they.

Hoard not from swiftness of thy stream
The shallowest cruse of tears !
Pools still as heav'n shall lovelier dream
In future years.

Squander thy love as she that flings
Her soul away on night,—
Lovely are love's far echoings,
Height unto height !

O, make no compact with the sun,
No compact with the moon !
Night falls full-cloaked, and light is gone,
Sudden and soon.

TREACHERY

SHE had amid her ringlets bound
Green leaves to rival their dark hue ;
How could such locks with beauty bound
 Dry up their dew,
 Wither them through and through ?

She had within her dark eyes lit
Sweet fires to burn all doubt away ;
Yet did those fires, in darkness lit,
 Burn but a day,¹
 Not ev'n till twilight stay.

She had within a dusk of words
A vow in simple splendour set ;
How, in the memory of such words,
 Could she forget
 That vow—the soul of it ?

IN VAIN

I KNOCKED upon thy door ajar,
While yet the woods with buds were grey,
Nought but a little child I heard
 Warbling at break of day.

I knocked when June had lured her rose
To mask the sharpness of its thorn ;
Knocked yet again, heard only yet
 Thee singing of the morn.

The frail convolvulus had wreath'd
Its cup, but the faint flush of eve
Lingered upon thy Western wall ;
 Thou hadst no word to give.

Once yet I came ; the winter stars
Above thy house wheeled wildly bright ;
Footsore I stood before thy door,—
 Wide open into night.

THE MIRACLE

WHO beckons the green ivy up
 Its solitary tower of stone?
What spirit lures the bindweed's cup
 Unfaltering on?
Calls ev'n the starry lichen to climb
By agelong inches endless Time?

Who bids the hollyhock uplift
 Her rod of fast-sealed buds on high;
Fling wide her petals silent, swift,
 Lovely to the sky?
Since as she kindled, so she'll fade,
Flow'r above flow'r in squalor laid.

Ever the heavy billow rears
 All its sea-length in green, hushed wall;
But totters as the shore it nears,
 Foams to its fall;
Where was its mark? on what vain quest
Rose that great water from its rest?

So creeps ambition on ; so climb

Man's vaunting thoughts. He, set on high,
Forgets his birth, small space, brief time,
That he shall die ;

Dreams blindly in his dark, still air ;
Consumes his strength ; strips himself bare ;

Rejects delight, ease, pleasure, hope,
Seeking in vain, but seeking yet,
Past earthly promise, earthly scope,
On one aim set :

As if like Chaucer's child he thought
All but "O Alma !" nought.

EVEN ROSEMARY

I HAVE seen a grave this day,
Yet no worm did therein lie ;—
Only sweet Faith laid away,
 Lonely to die,
Lonely as he lived, to die.

There's no buds. Ev'n rosemary
Hath sad dreams for smell withal ;
Ev'n Hope's rose's leaf would be
 Restless to fall ;
To have done, and fade, and fall.

I will never walk again
Where such brittle dust doth lie ;
Where to weep were quite in vain ;
 Vain too to sigh,
Only vain to weep and sigh.

Flee afar, then, heart, lest thou,
Quick with brooding on that spot,
Feign to see a dead face now,
Features forgot,
Eyes ev'n Heaven shall open not!

KEEP INNOCENCY

LIKE an old battle, youth is wild
With bugle and spear, and counter cry,
Fanfare and drummery, yet a child
Dreaming of that sweet chivalry,
The piercing terror cannot see.

He, with a mild and serious eye
Along the azure of the years,
Sees the sweet pomp sweep hurtling by ;
But he sees not death's blood and tears,
Sees not the plunging of the spears.

And all the strident horror of
Horse and rider in red defeat,
Is only music fine enough
To lull him into slumber sweet
In fields where ewe and lambkin bleat.

O, if with such simplicity
Himself take arms and suffer war ;
With beams his targe shall gilded be,
Tho' in the thickening gloom be far
The steadfast light of any star !

Tho' hoarse War's eagle on him perch,
Quickened with guilty lightnings,—there
It shall in vain for terror search,
Where a child's eyes 'neath bloody hair
Gaze purely thro' the dingy air.

And when the wheeling rout is spent,
Tho' in the heaps of slain he lie ;
Or lonely in his last content ;
Quenchless shall burn in secrecy
The flame Death knows his victors by.

THE PHANTOM

WILT thou never come again,

Beauteous one?

Yet the woods are green and dim,

Yet the birds' deluding cry

Echoes in the hollow sky,

Yet the falling waters brim

The clear pool which thou wast fain

To paint thy lovely cheek upon,

Beauteous one!

I may see the thorny rose

Stir and wake

The dark dewdrop on her gold;

But thy secret will she keep

Half-divulged—yet all untold,

Since a child's heart woke from sleep.

The faltering sunbeam fades and goes;

The night-bird whistles in the brake;

The willows quake;

Utter darkness falls; the wind

Sighs no more:

Yet it seems the silence yearns
But to catch thy fleeting foot.
Yet the wandering glowworm burns
Lest her lamp should light thee not—
Thee whom I shall never find.
Though thy shadow lean before,
Thou thyself return'st no more—
Never more.

All the world's woods, tree o'er tree,
Come to nought.
Birds, flow'rs, beasts, how transient they!—
Angels of a flying day ;
Love is quenched ; dreams drown in sleep ;
Ruin nods along the deep :
Only thou immortally
Hauntest on
This poor earth in Time's flux caught ;
Hauntest on, pursued—unwon,
Phantom child of memory,
Beauteous one !

VOICES

WHO is it calling by the darkened river
Where the moss lies smooth and deep,
And the dark trees lean unmoving arms,
Silent and vague in sleep,
And the bright-heeled constellations pass
In splendour through the gloom ;—
Who is it calling o'er the darkened river
In music, "Come!"?

Who is it wandering in the summer meadows
Where the children stoop and play,
'Mid the green faint-scented flowers, spinning
The guileless hours away?
Who touches their bright hair? who puts
A wind-shell to each cheek,
Whisp'ring betwixt its breathing silences,
"Seek! seek!"?

Who is it watching in the gathering twilight,
 When the curfew bird hath flown
On eager wings, from song to silence,
 To its darkened nest alone?
Who takes for brightening eyes the stars,
 For locks the still moonbeam,
Sighs through the dews of evening peacefully-
 Falling, "Dream!"?

So are we haunted ; night and day
 Invisible witnesses
Speak, or keep silent ; watch and wait ;
 Steadfast and slumberless :—
Shades of the air, shades in the mind,
 Ghosts in the heart that weep
In this thicket of all perplexities
 And tumult, "Sleep!"

THULE

IF thou art sweet as they are sad
Who on the shores of Time's salt sea
Watch on the dim horizon fade
Ships bearing love to night and thee ;

If past all beacons Hope hath lit
In the dark wanderings of the deep,
They who unwilling traverse it
Dream not till dawn unseal their sleep ;

Ah, cease not in thy winds to mock
Us who yet wake but cannot see
Thy distant shores ; who at each shock
Of the waves' onset faint for thee !

THE BIRTNIGHT

DEAREST, it was a night
That in its darkness rocked Orion's stars ;
A sighing wind ran faintly white
Along the willows, and the cedar boughs
Laid their wide hands in stealthy peace across
The starry silence of their antique moss :
No sound save rushing air,
Cold, yet most sweet with Spring,
And in thy mother's arms, couched weeping
there,
Thou, lovely thing.

THE DEATH-DREAM

WHO, now, put dreams into thy slumb'ring
mind ?

Who, with bright Fear's lean taper, crossed a
hand

Athwart its beam, and stooping, truth
maligned,

Spake so thy spirit speech should understand,
And with a dread "He's dead!" awaked a
peal

Of frenzied bells along the vacant ways
Of thy poor earthly heart; waked thee to
steal,

Like dawn distraught upon unhappy days,
To prove nought, nothing? Was it Time's
large voice

Out of th' inscrutable future whispered so?
Or but the horror of a little noise
Earth wakes at dead of night? Or does Love
know

When his sweet wings weary and droop, and
ev'n

In sleep cries audibly a shrill remorse?

Or, haply, was it I who out of dream

Stole but a little way where shadows course,—

Called back to thee across the eternal stream?

“WHERE IS THY VICTORY?”

NONE, none can tell where I shall be
When the unclean earth covers me ;
Only in surety if thou cry
Where my perplexèd ashes lie,
Know, 'tis but death's necessity
That keeps my tongue from answering thee.

Ev'n if no more my shadow may
Lean for a moment in thy day ;
No more the whole earth light'n as if
Thou near, it had nought else to give :—
Surely 'tis but Heav'n's strategy
To prove death immortality.

Yet should I sleep—and no more dream,
Sad would the last awakening seem,
If my cold heart, with love once hot,
Had thee in sleep remember'd not :
How could I wake to find that I
Had slept alone, yet easefully ?

64 "WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"

Or should in sleep glad visions come :
Sick, in an alien land, for home
Would be my eyes in their bright beam ;
Awake, we know 'tis not a dream ;
Asleep, some devil in the mind
Might truest thoughts with false enwind.

Life is a mockery if death
Have the least power men say it hath.
As to a hound that mewing waits,
Death opens, and shuts to, his gates ;
Else ev'n dry bones might rise and say,—
" 'Tis *ye* are dead and laid away."

Innocent children out of nought
Build up a universe of thought,
And out of silence fashion Heaven :
So, dear, is this poor dying even,
Seeing thou shalt be touched, heard, seen,
Better than when dust stood between.

FOREBODING

THOU canst not see him standing by—

Time—with a popped hand
Stealing thy youth's simplicity,
Even as falls unceasingly
His waning sand.

He'll pluck thy childish roses as
The summer from her bush
Strips all the loveliness that was ;
Ev'n to the silence evening has
Thy laughter hush.

Thy locks too faint for earthly gold,
The meekness of thine eyes,
He'll dark'n and dim, and to his fold
Drive, 'gainst the night, thy stainless, old
Innocencies ;

Thy simple words confuse and mar,
Thy tenderest thoughts delude,
Draw a long cloud athwart thy star,
Still with loud timbrels heav'n's far
Faint interlude.

Thou canst not see ; *I* see, dearest ;
O, then, yet patient be,
Tho' love refuse thy heart all rest,
Tho' even love wax angry, lest
Love should lose *thee* ?

SONNETS

THE HAPPY ENCOUNTER

I SAW sweet Poetry turn troubled eyes
On shaggy Science nosing in the grass,
For by that way poor Poetry must pass
On her long pilgrimage to Paradise.
He snuffled, grunted, squealed ; perplexed by
flies,
Parched, weatherworn, and near of sight,
alas!
From peering close where very little was
In dens secluded from the open skies.

But Poetry in bravery went down,
And called his name, soft, clear, and fear-
lessly ;
Stooped low, and stroked his muzzle over-
grown ;

68 THE HAPPY ENCOUNTER

Refreshed his drought with dew ; wiped pure
and free

His eyes : and lo ! laughed loud for joy to
see

In those grey deeps the azure of her own.

COUP DE GRÂCE

So Malice sharp'd his pen, and nibbled it,
And leered 'neath faltering eyelids at the
flame

Of his calm candle till a notion came,
Coarse, acrid, with a distant hint of wit.
Once more he simmered, and once more he
writ,

Till not a dash was dull, a comma lame ;
Then exquisitely failed to sign his name,
Leaving the world to trace a slug by its spit.

Such was the barb, O Keats, (vain tongues
would have),

Troubled in its calm flight thy lovely art ;
Cankered thy youth, thy faith ; abashed the
brave,

Untarnishable sweetness of thy heart :

How should these dullards dream *they*
winged the dart

That pierced thee, silent, in th' unanswering
grave !

APRIL

COME, then, with show'rs, I love thy cloudy
face

Gilded with splendour of the sunbeams
thro'

The heedless glory of thy locks: I know
The arch, sweet languor of thy fleeting grace,
The windy lovebeams of thy dwelling-place,

Thy dim dells where in azure bluebells blow,
The brimming rivers where thy lightnings go
Harmless and full and swift from race to race.

Thou tak'st all young hearts captive with
thine eyes;

At rumour of thee the tongues of children ring
Louder than bees; the golden poplars rise

Like trumps of peace; and birds, on home-
ward wing,

Fly mocking echoes shrill along the skies,
Above the waves' grave diapasoning.

SEA-MAGIC

TO R. I.

MY heart faints in me for the distant sea,
The roar of London is the roar of ire
The lion utters in his old desire
For Libya out of dim captivity ;
The long bright silver of Cheapside I see,
Her gilded weathercocks on roof and spire
Exulting eastward in the western fire ;
All things recall one heart-sick memory :—
Ever the rustle of the advancing foam,
The surges' desolate thunder, and the cry
As of some lone babe in the whispering sky ;
Ever I peer into the restless gloom
To where a ship clad dim and loftily
Looms steadfast in the wonder of her home.

MESSENGERS

A FEW all-faithful words, a glance from eyes
That in their deeps hide hosts they cannot
see—

Phantoms of loveliest simplicity ;
A transient touch—some bird's that twittering
flies

Into the primrose of the deepening skies ;
A child's pure cheek pressed cold and tran-
quilly

Upon a brow ashamed, in misery ;
A voice that sings easefully echo-wise :

Whence are they in a world so alien ?

Are they the waterdrops of that vast flood
Death shall unloose ? Shall all they hint, again
In fulness be retold ? Shall this wild blood
That rocks to them, lull down to stillness when
These light-wing messengers flit back to God ?

IRREVOCABLE

I SOMETIMES wonder what my life doth mean
Now you are gone ; the long, bright days,
the nights

Of silence, the vicissitudes, the sights,
The intrusive sounds, the dull, continuous
scene—

It only minds me of the might-have-been,
And in itself a taper is that lights
Its own dark solitude : my spirit fights
In vain to pierce the veil and look within.

The fountain of my tears is sealed and dry ;
I do not grieve ; my laughter is a jest ;
My prayers an arid bitterness ; each sigh
The heedless habit of a tired breast.
My heart is dead ; and when I come to die,
Only to think of you no more were best.

WINTER COMING

O, THOU art like an autumn to my days,
Shining in still, sweet light on lonelier hours
Of yellowing leaves, and well-nigh faded
flowers ;
In thy dear sight the birds renew their lays,
But with how faint a cheer ! how meek their
praise
Rememb'ring April gone ! — his crystal
showers,
His heav'n-surmounting wind-engirdled towers,
And all the graveness of his childlike ways.

The hours press closer on to winter now ;
In misty solitudes brief suns arise ;
And all the wonder now hath left my eyes,
And all my heart sinks to remember how
Once, once we loved, we who are grown so
wise—
Youth vanished, winter coming—I and thou !

THE MARKET-PLACE

My mind is like a clamorous market-place ;
All day in wind, rain, sun, its babel wells ;
Voice answering to voice in tumult swells.
Chaffering and laughing, pushing for a place,
My thoughts haste on, gay, strange, poor,
simple, base ;
This one buys dust, and that a bauble sells :
But none to any scrutiny hints or tells
The haunting secrets hidd'n in each sad face.
Ay, sad, 'neath sigh and smile, frown, laughter,
jeer ;
Yet sad—like that still twilight in the West,
Lonely with one sweet star serene and clear,
Dwelling, when all this place is hushed to rest,
On vacant stall, gold, refuse, worst and best,
Abandoned utterly in haste and fear.

ANATOMY

By chance, my fingers, resting on my face,
Stayed suddenly where in its orbit shone
The lamp of all things beautiful ; then on,
Following more heedfully, did softly trace
Each arch and prominence and hollow place
That shall revealed be when all else is gone—
Warmth, colour, roundness—to oblivion,
And nothing left but darkness and disgrace.
Life like a moment passed seemed then to be ;
A transient dream this raiment that it wore ;
While spelled my hand out its mortality,
Made certain all that had seemed doubt
before :
Proved—O how vaguely, yet how lucidly!—
How much death does : and yet can do no
more.

EV'N IN THE GRAVE

I LAID my inventory at the hand
Of Death, who in his gloomy arbour sate ;
And while he conned it, sweet and desolate
I heard Love singing in that quiet land.
He read the record even to the end—
The heedless, livelong injuries of Fate,
The burden of foe, the burden of love and
hate ;
The wounds of foe, the bitter wounds of friend :

All, all, he read—ay, ev'n the indifference,
The vain talk, vainer silence, hope and
dream.

He questioned me : "What seek'st thou then
instead?"

I bowed my face in the pale evening gleam.
Then gazed he on me with strange innocence :
"Ev'n in the grave thou'lt have thyself,"
he said.

OMNISCIENCE

"Strew me o'er with maiden flowers."

Henry VIII.

WHY look'd'st thou on the beauties of the
earth

So gravely in thy deep omniscience;
Turn'd'st from the dews of their unclouded
birth

In woods where children call, and innocence
Broods like a dream within a lovely face,
To one wan hint, one backward glance on
grief,

On darken'd eyes beyond Time's fleeting
grace—

Death heavy and endless of a life too brief?

O love immeasurably meek that scanned,
Past all earth's fickle hopes, past beauty, lust,

The tottering palaces of wind and sand,
Pride and vain pomp, tears, ashes, rapture,
dust,
The unearthly tomb whose fading stone shall
keep
Man, till his Saviour come, at peace asleep!

BRIGHT LIFE

"COME now," I said, "put off these webs of
death,

Distract this leaden yearning of thine eyes
From lichened banks of peace, sad mysteries
Of dust fall'n-in where passed the flitting
breath :

Turn thy sick thoughts from him that slumbereth
In moulder'd linen to the living skies,
The sun's bright-clouded principalities,
The salt deliciousness the sea-breeze hath !

Lay thy warm hand on earth's cold clods and
think

What exquisite greenness sprouts from these
to grace
The moving fields of summer ; on the brink
Of archèd waves the sea-horizon trace,
Whence wheels night's galaxy ; and in silence
sink

Thy pride in rapture of life's dwelling-place !"

HUMANITY

‘EVER exulting in thyself, on fire
To flaunt the purple of the Universe,
To strut and strut, and thy great part rehearse ;

Ever the slave of every proud desire ;
Come now a little down where sports thy sire !
Choose thy small better from thy abounding worse !

Prove thou thy lordship who hadst dust for nurse,
And for thy swaddling the primeval mire !”

Then stooped our Manhood nearer, deep and still,

As from earth’s mountains an unvoyaged sea,
Hushed my faint voice in its great peace until
’T seemed but a bird’s cry in eternity ;
And in its future loomed the undreamable,
And in its past slept simple men like me.

GLORIA MUNDI

UPON a bank, easeless with knobs of gold,
 Beneath a canopy of noonday smoke,
I saw a measureless Beast, morose and bold,
 With eyes like one from filthy dreams awoke,
Who stares upon the daylight in despair
For very terror of the nothing there.

This beast in one flat hand clutched vulture-wise
 A glitt'ring image of itself in jet,
And with the other groped about its eyes
 To drive away the dreams that pestered it ;
And never ceased its coils to toss and beat
The mire encumbering its feeble feet.

Sharp was its hunger, though continually
 It seemed a cud of stones to ruminate,
And often like a dog let glittering lie
 'This meatless fare, its foolish gaze to sate ;
Once more convulsively to stoop its jaw,
Or seize the morsel with an envious paw.

Indeed, it seemed a hidden enemy

Must lurk within the clouds above that bank,
It strained so wildly its pale, stubborn eye,
To pierce its own foul vapours dim and
dank ;

Till, wearied out, it raved in wrath and foam
Daring that Nought Invisible to come.

Ay, and it seemed some strange delight to find

In this unmeaning din, till, suddenly,
As if it heard a rumour on the wind,
Or far away its freër children cry,
Lifting its face made-quiet, there it stayed
Till died the echo its own rage had made.

That place alone was barren where it lay ;

Flow'rs bloomed beyond, utterly sweet and
fair ;
And ev'n its own dull heart might think to
stay

In livelong thirst of a clear river there,
Flowing from unseen hills to unheard seas,
Through a still vale of yew and almond trees.

And then I spied in the lush green below
 Its tortured belly, One, like silver, pale,
With fingers closed upon a rope of straw,
 That bound the Beast, squat neck to hoary
 tail ;
Lonely in all that verdure faint and deep,
He watched the monster as a shepherd sheep.

I marvelled at the power, strength, and rage
 Of this poor creature in such slavery bound,
Tettered with worms of fear ; forlorn with age ;
 Its blue wing-stumps stretched helpless on
 the ground ;
While twilight faded into darkness deep,
And he who watched it piped its pangs asleep.

IDLENESS

I SAW old Idleness, fat, with great cheeks
Puffed to the huge circumference of a sigh,
But past all tinge of apples long ago.
His boyish fingers twiddled up and down
The filthy remnant of a cup of physic
That thick'd in odour all the while he stayed.
His eyes were sad as fishes that swim up,
And stare upon an element not theirs
Through a thin skin of shrewish water, then
Turn on a languid fin, and dip, dip, down,
Into unplumbed, vast, oozy deeps of dream.
His stomach was his master, and proclaimed it :
And never were such meagre pupils set
Before so vexed a tyrant, as his thoughts
Before that gross epitome of ills.
There seemed no notion i' him not of himself ;
And when upon the wan green of his eye
I marked the gathering lustre of a tear,

Thought I myself should weep, until I caught
A grey, smug smile of satisfaction smirch
His pallid features at his misery.

And much I laughed to see the little snares
He'd set for pests to vex him : his great feet
Prisoned in greater boots ; so narrow a stool
To seat such elephantine parts as his ;
Ay, and the book he read—a Hebrew Bible ;
And, to incite a somewhat backward wit,
An old, crabb'd, worm'd, Greek dictionary ;
and—

A foxy Ovid bound in dappled calf.

GOLIATH

STILL as a mountain with dark pines and sun
He stood between the armies, and his shout
Rolled from the empyrean above the host ;—
“ Bid any little flea ye have come forth,
And wince at death upon my finger-nail ! ”
He turned his large-boned face ; and all his
steel

Tossed into beams the lustre of the noon ;
And all the shaggy horror of his locks
Rustled like locusts in a field of corn ;
The meagre pupil of his shameless eye
Moved like a cormorant o'er a glassy sea.
He stretched his limbs, and laughed into the
air,

To feel the groaning sinews of his breast,
And the long gush of his swell'n arteries
pause :

And, nodding, wheeled, tow'ring in all his
height.

Then, like a wind that hushes, gazed and saw
Down, down, far down upon the untroubled
green

A shepherd-boy that swung a little sling.
Goliath shut his lids to drive that mote
Which vexed the eastern azure of his eye
Out of his vision ; and stared down again.
Yet stood the youth there, ruddy in the flare
Of his vast shield, nor spake, nor quailed,
gazed up

As one might scan a mountain to be scaled.
Then, as it were, a voice unearthly still
Cried in the cavern of his bristling ear,
“His name is little Death!” And, like the
flush

That dyes Sahara to its lifeless verge,
His brow's bright brass flamed into sudden
crimson ;

And his great spear leapt upward, lightning-like,
Shaking a dreadful thunder in the air ;
Spun betwixt earth and sky, bright as a berg
That hoards the sunlight in a myriad spires,
Crashed : and struck echo thro' an army's
heart.

Then paused Goliath, and stared down again.
And fleet-foot Fear from rolling orbs perceived
Steadfast, unharmed, a stooping shepherd-boy
Frowning upon the target of his face.

And wrath tossed suddenly up once more his
hand ;

And a deep groan grieved all his strength in
him.

He breathed ; and, lost in dazzling darkness,
prayed—

Besought his reins, his gloating gods, his youth :
And turned to smite what he no more could
see.

Then sped the singing pebble-messenger,
The chosen of the Lord from Israel's brooks,
Fleet to its mark, and hollowed a light path
Down to the appalling Babel of his brain.
And like the smoke of dreaming Souffrière
Dust rose in cloud, spread wide, slow silted
down

Softly all softly on his armour's blaze.

YOUTH

WITH splendour shod sweeps Sirius through
the night,

But Youth yet brightlier runs his course than
he.

Youth hath the raiment of his childhood doffed
At morning-prime by life's resounding sea,
And lonely in beauty stands confronting
Heaven.

He strides lithe-limbed, magnificently armed ;
His young head helmeted with high desire ;
His heart a haven of braveries fleet and eager ;
His eyes like heroes never to be subdued,
And all man's passionate history in his blood.
Youth is Adonis, panting for the chase,
Scorning all languor, blandishment, all ease,
Scorning to dally while the noon slips by,
While rings the horn, fleets golden and sweet
the hour,

And bursts untamed Ambition through the
glades.

Oh, in what wrath he sees still Evening pour
Her crystal vial from the darkening West !

Now is an end to day's bright prowess come ;

The flaming sunbeams multitudinous

Fade, as they kindled, on the unfolded rose.

He loves not Night's pale solitary brows,

Nor silver Hesper in the shadowy steep,

But like a panther fretteth in his lair,

Turning to slumb'r as to his strength's dis-
grace ;

To sigh in dream 'neath moonlight's arrowy
showers,

Marv'ling what makes Apollo's lute so still.

But dawn ascends. The night-watch'd stars
shall not

Cry from heav'n's battlements in vain of day.

Earth wakens, cold with flowers, and the
mists,

Smitten of light, fly, fall in radiant dew.

Birds mounting to the dayspring pour their
throats ;

And in like music she beguileth him :—

"Thou babe, here is my breast! Thou foolish
one,

Strip off dull sleep; thy mother—here am I!"
And frowning up he leaps to her smooth arms,
As mounts the fledgling eagle tow'rd the sun . . .
How hasten his echoing feet when sweet
tongues call,

And Love's unerring archery sings nigh!
Dim then with incense burns his heart of
flame;

His thoughts are aisles where ever voices
quire:

And silence is divine with folded wings.
He voyages at a hazard Arctic seas;
Scales, as for pastime, ice-encinctured Alps;
No torrent daunts him; no abyss appals;
Wind ne'er so faintly the far horn of danger,
Its echo tingles on a listening ear;
Whithersoever summon it he'll follow,
And vain were every bounty earth can squander
To salve the sorrow for a deed undared.
He pines to set desire beyond his scope,
And beauteous childhood wells into his soul
In covet of the fruits that droop and burn

Where rise th' unchanging terraces of death.
What worth renown when all that dawn conceived

Fades to a phantom in the chimes of night?
What worth the flattery of a myriad tongues
If mute be the proud umpire of his heart?
He'll strive him for an amaranthine crown
Outlasting laurel and the world's applause.
Earth but a shadow is of beauty cast
In trembling beams upon the stream of Time:
He'll set his heart no more on shadows now;
But brood in envy of those high summits Man
Hath left to sparkle in midmost heav'n alone;
Strive with smooth lead to plumb the un-
answering deeps,

Where Wisdom heark'ns the music of her wells.
He'll walk in sure confederacy with truth.
Betwixt him and the Hills Celestial falls
Only a blinding avalanche of sun . . .
Flow'rs, birds, the river rushing in its strength,
The pine upon the mountains, the broad wind
Burdened with snowy coldness, the salt sea,
The shalms of morning—Youth's wild heart
holds all ;—

All glory, all wonder, purity, beauty, grace,
All things conceived of man, except defeat.
So spurns he hope: his hope is certainty.
And faith—while every act is faith trans-
figured,

How should through mournful shadows glance
such eyes?

God walketh in His brightness on the hills,
And sitteth in the wonder of the bow,
And calleth o'er the waters of delight:—
What were all Time to prove all gratitude?
What life's brief dust to Heav'n's unfading
rose? . . .

How fleet a foot then Youth's for long pursuit!
How high a courage to search wisdom out,
While he unwitting of't burns folly away!
Is aught too bold, too infinite, to dream
Fate's arm may guard for babes to spring
from him,
Who flings his life down, drenched with rapture
through,
To buy unchallenged honour for his bones?

THE VOICE OF MELANCHOLY

“RETURN from out thy stillness, though the
dust

Lie thick upon thy earthly beauty, though
The ever-wandering shapes of Night creep
through

Youth's fallen tabernacle! Now in long
Surge of recurrent light the days swing by,
Soundless above thine ears once musical,
Unnumbered by a heart expert in love,
Unmarked by those fall'n princes once thine
eyes.—

Oh, what defeat, bright warrior, what disgrace,
To fret entwined in the bindweed's root,
And rot like manna, lovelier than the rose!
Once thou would'st turn thy face enriched
with smiles,

Thy lips a thought asunder, and thy hair
Shining within the sun's magnificent ray;

96 THE VOICE OF MELANCHOLY

Stand would'st thou like a beacon by deep
seas :—

All light, all excellence, all joy, gone now ;
Even the classic beauty of thy face
Melted like snow ; dark as a moon eclipsed ;
Never to bright'n again 'neath endless night"
So did I brood, unanswered and alone,
Crying, " Return, return !"

O simple fool !

What would'st thou out of the deep grave
should rise ?

What, from amid death's cypresses, awake ;
Heave up the sod ; press back the fruited
boughs ;

And lift his eyes across the tombs on thee ?
Would love burn there, or measureless re-
proach ?

Would Life's bright mantle, stiff with idiot
pomp,

Lie easy on shoulders whence a shroud had
fall'n ?

Would Morn's shrill nightingale above his brows
Ring sweet on ears long-sealed in echoless
peace ?

Would those grey hands caress earth's tarnish'd
orb,

And those still feet be amorous of spurs?

And that unutterably agèd head,

Darken'd with pansies fadeless, changeless,
still,

How would it don again youth's triple crown,
Piercing the keenlier as its roses die?

Nay, but the very wind that stirred his hair

Would seem a tempest to sleep deep as his;

And the perplexèd galaxy of the stars

Intolerable cressets to his eyes,

Accustomed to a night as dark as his;

And the pale dew of daisied turf at dawn

The wine of madness to lips dry as his.

Oh, with what shuddering would those atoms
meet!

With what a burning sluggardry that blood

Creep thro' its long disusèd channels from

The roaring chaos of his heart! What grief

Would wildly ring in the first words he said!

What sad astonishment besteept that brain,

And tears more pitiable than infancy's

Blur the estrangèd beauty of the dawn! . . .

Leave thou his memory, as his dust, at rest ;
Nor burden peace with lamentable cries !
There lurks no shadow in the crypt of death ;
Nor any shadow in the height of heaven :
Beyond the survey of the dark earth gone
He bides encloistered ev'n from love's surmise.
Cry then no more, "Return, return !"—no
more !

Thy thoughts are shallow, thy experience brief ;
Whence learnedst *thou* of the riches of the
grave ?

“PORTRAIT OF A BOY”

VELASQUEZ

AT evens with the copious April clouds ;
With meek, wild face he stands ; and in his
eye

Deeps where the empyrean ever broods,
And in his mouth some femininity.—
Ah ! for we know his secret, hath not life,
So strangely shod his feet lest, suddenly,
He should remember him—the babbling strife
Of Venus’ sparrows—lest he stoop and fly,
Chafing at earth, into that April sky ?

UNPAUSING

O SWEETEST, stay !

One moment in thy lonely play

Turn, child, and look

Ev'n but a little on that great-leaf book,

Whose livelong record when thine eyes are old

Will seem, how lovely a tale, how briefly told !

VAIN FINDING

EVER before my face there went
Betwixt earth's buds and me
A beauty beyond earth's content,
A hope—half memory :
Till in the woods one evening—
Ah! eyes as dark as they,
Fastened on mine unwontedly,
Grey, and dear heart, how grey !

VIRTUE

HER breast is cold ; her hands how faint and
wan !

And the deep wonder of her starry eyes,
Seemingly lost in cloudless Paradise,
And all earth's sorrow out of memory gone.
Yet sings her clear voice unrelenting on
Of loveliest impossibilities ;

Though echo only answer her with sighs
Of effort wasted and delights foregone.

Spent, baffled, 'wilderer, hated and despised,
Her straggling warriors hasten to defeat ;
By wounds distracted, and by night surprised,
Fall where death's darkness and oblivion
meet :

Yet, yet—O breast how cold ! O hope how
far !

Grant my son's ashes lie where these men's
are !

NAPOLEON

“WHAT is the world, O soldiers?

It is I :

I, this incessant snow,

This northern sky ;

Soldiers, this solitude

Through which we go

Is I.”

ENGLAND

No lovelier hills than thine have laid
 My tired thoughts to rest ;
No peace of lovelier valleys made
 Like peace within my breast.

Thine are the woods whereto my soul,
 Out of the noontide beam,
Flees for a refuge green and cool
 And tranquil as a dream.

Thy breaking seas like trumpets peal ;
 Thy clouds—how oft have I
Watched their bright towers of silence steal
 Into infinity !

My heart within me faints to roam
 In thought ev'n far from thee :
Thine be the grave whereto I come,
 And thine my darkness be.

THE SEAS OF ENGLAND

THE seas of England are our old delight ;
Let the loud billow of the shingly shore
Sing freedom on her breezes evermore
To all earth's ships that sailing heave in sight !

The gaunt sea-nettle be our fortitude,
Sturdily blowing where the clear wave sips ;
O, be the glory of our men and ships
Rapturous, woe-unheeding hardihood !

There is great courage in a land that hath
Liberty guarded by the unearthly seas ;
And ev'n to find peace at the last in these
How many a sailor hath sailed down to death !

Their names are like a splendour in old song ;
Their record shines like bays along the years ;
Their jubilation is the cry man hears
Sailing sun-fronted the vast deeps among.

The seas of England are our old delight ;

Let the loud billow of the shingly shore

Sing freedom on her breezes evermore

To all earth's ships that sailing heave in sight !

TRUCE

FAR inland here Death's pinions mocked the
roar

Of English seas ;

We sleep to wake no more,

Hushed, and at ease ;

Till sound a trump, shore on to echoing shore,

Rouse from a peace, unwonted then to war,

Us and our enemies.

EVENING

WHEN twilight darkens, and one by one,
The sweet birds to their nests have gone ;
When to green banks the glow-worms bring
Pale lamps to brighten evening ;
Then stirs in his thick sleep the owl
Thorough the dewy air to prowl.

Hawking the meadows swiftly he flits,
While the small mouse atrembling sits
With tiny eye of fear upcast
Until his brooding shape be past,
Hiding her where the moonbeams beat,
Casting black shadows in the wheat.

Now all is still : the field-man is
Lapped deep in slumb'ring silentness.
Not a leaf stirs, but clouds on high
Pass in dim flocks across the sky,
Puffed by a breeze too light to move
Aught but these wakeful sheep above.

O what an arch of light now spans
These fields by night no longer Man's!
Their ancient Master is abroad,
Walking beneath the moonlight cold :
His presence is the stillness, He
Fills earth with beauteous mystery.

NIGHT

ALL from the light of the sweet moon
Tired men lie now abed ;
Actionless, full of visions, soon
Vanishing, soon sped.

The starry night afloat with beams
Of crystal light scarce stirs :
Only its birds—the cocks, the streams,
Call 'neath heaven's Wanderers.

All's silent ; all hearts still ;
Love, cunning, fire fall'n low :
When faint morn straying on the hill
Sighs, and his soft airs flow.

THE UNIVERSE

I HEARD a little child 'neath many stars
Talk as he ran along
To some sweet riddle in his mind that
seemed
A tiptoe into song.

In his dark eyes lay a wild universe,—
Wild forests, peaks, and crests,
Angels and fairies, giants, wolves and he
Were that world's only guests.

Elsewhere was home and mother, his warm
bed :—

Now, only God alone
Could, arm'd with all His power and wisdom,
make
Earths richer than his own.

O Man!—thy dreams, thy passions, hopes,
desires!—

He in his pity keep

A homely bed where love may lull a child's
Fond Universe asleep!

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD.

REVERIE

BRING not bright candles, for his eyes
In twilight have sweet company ;
Bring not bright candles, else they fly—
His phantoms fly—
Gazing aggrieved on thee !

Bring not bright candles, startle not
The phantoms of a vacant room,
Flocking above a child that dreams—
Deep, deep in dreams,—
Hid, in the gathering gloom !

Bring not bright candles to those eyes
That between earth and stars descry,
Lovelier for the shadows there,
Children of air,
Palaces in the sky !

THE MASSACRE

THE shadow of a poplar tree
Lay in that lake of sun,
As I with my little sword went in—
Against a thousand, one.

Haughty and infinitely armed,
Insolent in their wrath,
Plumed high with purple plumes they held
The narrow meadow path.

The air was sultry ; all was still ;
The sun like flashing glass ;
And snip-snap my light-whispering steel
In arcs of light did pass.

Lightly and dull fell each proud head,
Spiked keen without avail,
Till swam my discontented blade
With ichor green and pale.

And silence fell : the rushing sun
 Stood still in paths of heat,
Gazing in waves of horror on
 The dead about my feet.

Never a whirl of wing, no bee
 Stirred o'er the shameful slain ;
Nought but a thirsty wasp crept in,
 Stooped, and came out again.

The very air trembled in fear ;
 Eclipsing shadow seemed
Rising in crimson waves of gloom—
 On one who dreamed.

ECHO

“WHO called?” I said, and the words
Through the whispering glades,
Hither, thither, baffled the birds—
“Who called? Who called?”

The leafy boughs on high
Hissed in the sun ;
The dark air carried my cry
Faintly on ;—

Eyes in the green, in the shade,
In the motionless brake,
Voices that said what I said,
For mockery’s sake ;—

“Who cares?” I bawled thro’ my tears ;
The wind fell low :
In the silence, “Who cares? who cares?”
Wailed to and fro.

FEAR

I KNOW where lurk
The eyes of Fear ;
I, I alone,
Where shadowy-clear,
Watching for me,
Lurks Fear.

'Tis ever still
And dark, despite
All singing and
All candlelight,
'Tis ever cold,
And night.

He touches me ;
Says quietly,
" Stir not, nor whisper,
I am nigh ;
Walk noiseless on,
I am by ! "

He drives me
As a dog a sheep ;
Like a cold stone
I cannot weep.
He lifts me
Hot from sleep

In marble hands
To where on high
The jewelled horror
Of his eye
Dares me to struggle
Or cry.

No breast wherein
To chase away
That watchful shape !
Vain, vain to say
" Haunt not with night
The day ! "

THE MERMAIDS

SAND, sand ; hills of sand ;
And the wind where nothing is
Green and sweet of the land ;
 No grass, no trees,
 No bird, no butterfly,
But hills, hills of sand,
 And a burning sky.

Sea, sea ; mounds of the sea,
 Hollow, and dark, and blue,
Flashing incessantly
 The whole sea through ;
 No flower, no jutting root,
Only the floor of the sea,
 With foam afloat.

Blow, blow, winding shells ;
 And the watery fish,
Deaf to the hidden bells,
 In the waters splash ;

No streaming gold, no eyes
Watching along the waves,
But far-blown shells, faint bells,
From the darkling caves.

MYSELF

THERE is a garden grey
With mists of autumntide ;
Under the giant boughs,
Stretched green on every side,

Along the lonely paths,
A little child like me,
With face, with hands like mine,
Plays ever silently ;

On, on, quite silently,
When I am there alone,
Turns not his head ; lifts not his eyes ;
Heeds not as he plays on.

After the birds are flown
From singing in the trees,
When all is grey, all silent,
Voices, and winds, and bees ;

And I am there alone :
Forlornly, silently,
Plays in the evening garden
Myself with me.

AUTUMN

THERE is wind where the rose was ;
Cold rain where sweet grass was ;
 And clouds like sheep
 Stream o'er the steep
Grey skies where the lark was.

Nought gold where your hair was ;
Nought warm where your hand was ;
 But phantom, forlorn,
 Beneath the thorn,
Your ghost where your face was.

Sad winds where your voice was ;
Tears, tears where my heart was ;
 And ever with me,
 Child, ever with me,
Silence where hope was.

WINTER

GREEN Mistletoe!

Oh, I remember now

A dell of snow,

Frost on the bough;

None there but I:

Snow, snow, and a wintry sky.

None there but I,

And footprints one by one,

Zigzaggedly,

Where I had run;

Where gimp and powdery

A robin sat in the tree.

And he whistled sweet;

And I in the crusted snow

With snow-clubb'd feet

Jigged to and fro,

Till, from the day,

The rose-light ebbed away.

And the robin flew
Into the air, the air,
The white mist through ;
And small and rare
The night-frost fell
Into the calm and misty dell.

And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars
On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers.

And the sprawling Bear
Growled deep in the sky ;
And Orion's hair
Streamed sparkling by :
But the North sighed low,
" Snow, snow, more snow ! "

ENVOY

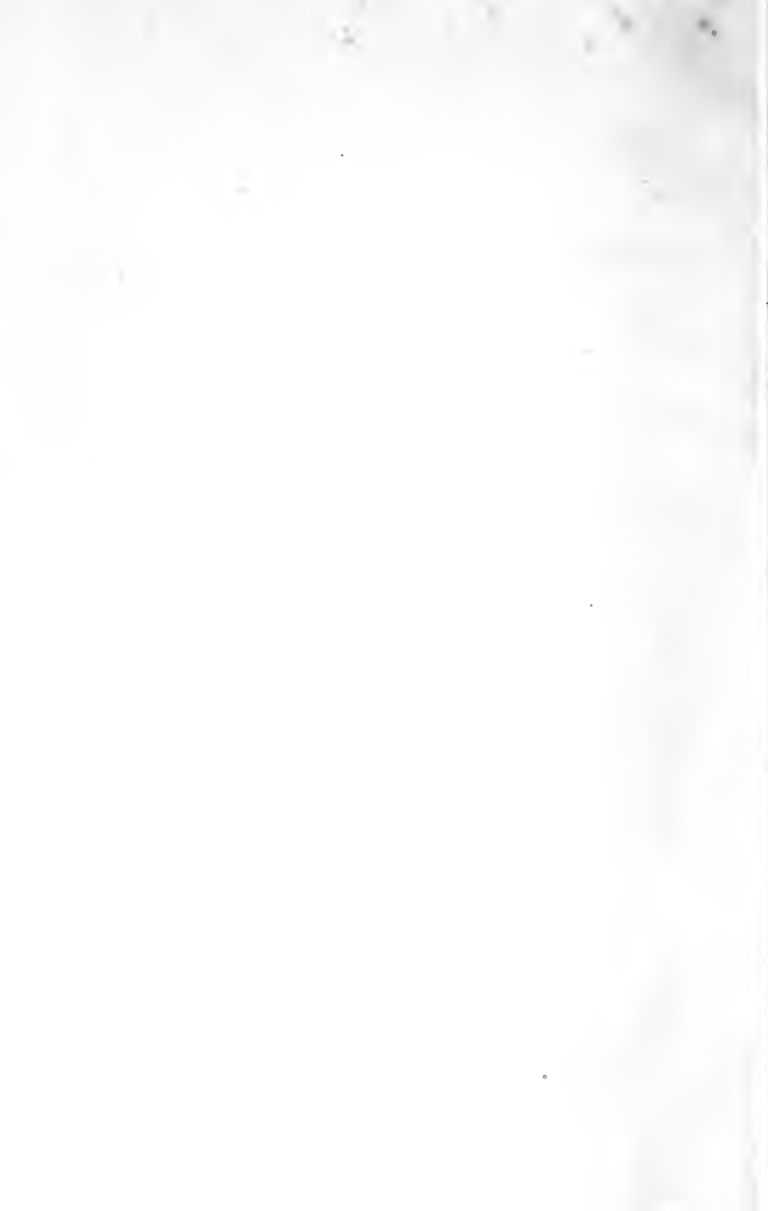
TO MY MOTHER

THINE is my all, how little when 'tis told
Beside thy gold !
Thine the first peace, and mine the livelong
strife ;
Thine the clear dawn, and mine the night of
life ;
Thine the unstain'd belief,
Darkened in grief.

Scarce ev'n a flow'r but thine its beauty and
name,
Dimm'd, yet the same ;
Never in twilight comes the moon to me,
Stealing thro' childhood's woods, but tells of
thee,
Falls, dear, on my wild heart,
And takes thy part.

Thou art the child, and I—how steeped in
age!

. A blotted page
From that clear, little book life's tak'n away :
How could I read it dear, so dark's the day ?
Be it all memory
'Twixt thee and me !



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